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Definition of “Filipino Roots” among Filipino High School Students in Osaka through Analysis of Speech Contest Scripts

RUIZ, Frieda Joy Angelica Olay

要約：本稿では、2018年から2020年にかけて大阪府で開催されたスピーチコンテストに参加した多文化背景を持つフィリピン人生徒のスピーチ台本について考察する。本稿の目的は3点である。第一に、コンテストで発表されたテーマを明らかにすること。第二に、参加者のライフイベントとの関連でテーマを検討することである。そして最後に、「フィリピンルーツ」の定義に関わるアクターを明らかにすることである。スピーチコンテストの台本は、対話的なやりとりとして捉えられるため、「多声的」である。「Wai Wai! トーク」の各出場者は、「日本以外のルーツ」を持つ個人であることについて自分なりのフレームワークを持っているが、生徒たちは、周囲の人々やそれらの人々の経験を織り交ぜながら、自分自身の経験を語っていることが観察される。

Abstract: This article examines speech contest scripts of Filipinos with multicultural background who participated in an Osaka prefecture-wide speech contest in Japan from 2018 to 2020. This paper has three objectives. First, to identify the themes presented in the contest. Second, to look at the topics in relation to life events of the participants. And lastly, to identify the actors involved in defining “Filipino roots.” The speech contest scripts are viewed as a dialogic exchange, therefore it is “multi-voiced.” While each Wai Wai! Talk contestant has their own framing about being an individual with “roots from outside of Japan,” the students are observed to weave their own experiences with people around them and these individuals’ experiences.

Keywords: Philippine languages, speech contest, defining “Filipino roots”

1. Introduction

An article from the United Nations Human Rights Office (2017) cites Saskia Schellekens, Special Advisor to the UN Envoy for Youth, as saying that having mother tongue or heritage language education in one's mother tongue is a key element in the success of minority youth. She said that "one of the best ways to improve cohesion and inclusion for minority youth is through education...It plays a formative role in socializing communities in the ideas of citizenship and is 'essential support for the development and maintenance of community identity.'" In Japan, Mother Tongue and Heritage Language classes (母語・継承語) are available in selected prefectures and municipalities.

According to the 2022 Japan Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) preliminary report about the acceptance status of children who need Japanese instruction, there are about 58,353 children and students nationwide who need Japanese language instruction. This is a 14.1% increase from their last survey conducted in 2018. The Osaka Prefectural Board of Education (大阪府教育委員会; hereafter, Board) writes in their 2007 Multicultural Coexistence Educational Support Handbook (多文化共生教育サポートハンドブック) that there are 20 native languages that are spoken by students in Osaka. Among these languages are Chinese, Filipino, and Vietnamese.

The Board defines "mother tongue" as the child's first language (excluding Japanese). The Board reveals that there are cases that even though the parents speak in their mother tongue, the children forget their own mother tongue and are no longer able to speak it. This results to making it impossible for the parent and child to communicate at home. Some schools in Osaka offer mother tongue instruction because it was found out that some children use their native language for thinking and it is necessary to enhance their native language for learning. Filipino, Portuguese, Nepali, Thai and Chinese language classes, among others, are offered in senior high schools in Osaka.

There are eight high schools¹⁾ in Osaka that accept students under the category called "Returnee

1) According to the Board's Enrollment Selection Implementation Guidelines for Returnee Students and Foreign Students who Need Japanese Language Instruction (2022), full term course is offered in the following high schools: Higashi-yodogawa (東淀川高等学校), Fukui (福井高等学校), Kadoma Namihaya (門真なみはや高等学校), Yaokita (八尾北高等学校), Seibi (成美高等学校), Nagayoshi (長吉高等学校), and Fusekita (布施北高等学校). Multi-part credit system Part I and II (Creative School) is offered in Osaka Wakaba High school (大阪わかば高等学校).

Students and Foreign Students who Need Japanese Language Instruction” (日本語指導が必要な帰国生徒・外国人生徒入学者). Prospective individuals who can apply for this category are: “in principle ... those who have returned from China and other countries or have foreign nationality, those who have transferred to the fourth grade or higher in the elementary school level for the first time, and those who have other special circumstances and are deemed appropriate by the Prefectural Board of Education” (Osaka Prefectural Board of Education, 2022). Aside from the availability of mother tongue and heritage language classes, there are also various activities for target students in senior high schools in Osaka such as multicultural clubs (多文化共生部) where students can practice Japanese, learn about the way of life in various countries, receive support in their school subjects and get career guidance. Annual multicultural festivals (多文化祭) are held and schools send representatives to compete in a prefecture-wide speech contest.

This paper examines speech contest scripts of Filipinos with multicultural background who participated in an Osaka-wide speech contest named Wai Wai! Talk (Wai Wai! トーク) from 2018 to 2020 (17th and 18th cycle²⁾, respectively). The contest is held twice yearly and participated by schools in Osaka that accept students who are considered to need Japanese language support. The first part of Wai Wai! Talk happens every June for second- and third-year high school students and the second part is held every January for first-year high school students. This paper has three objectives. First, to identify the themes presented in the contest. Second, to look at the topics in relation to life events of the participants. And lastly, to identify the actors involved in defining “Filipino roots.”

In the first part of this article, I describe the situation of students who need Japanese language instruction in Japan. This is followed a presentation of actions by the Board to respond to the situation and the availability of school activities to foster exchanges among students with multicultural background. After this, I present the results of my examination of Wai Wai! Talk speech scripts of students with “Filipino roots.” Basing on the speech scripts, who comprises as an individual with “Filipino roots” is clarified and that of there being other actors that participate in defining “Filipino roots” is explored. This is followed by the conclusion to the paper.

Wai Wai! Talk is participated by student representatives of senior high schools in Osaka who are

2) The 17th Wai Wai! Talk Part 1 was held on June 24, 2018 in Osaka Prefectural Seibi High School and Part 2 on January 19, 2019 in Osaka Prefectural Higashiyodogawa High School. The 18th Wai Wai! Talk Part 1 was held on June 23, 2019 in Osaka Prefectural Sumiyoshi High School and Part 2 on January 18, 2020 in Osaka Prefectural Higashiyodogawa High School.

classified to have “roots from outside of Japan.” The event announcement that is posted publicly online by the Osaka Prefecture Japanese Language Education Support Center (大阪府日本語教育支援センター) for the 17th and 18th cycle reads:

“High school students with foreign roots will talk about their experiences, thoughts and feelings, dreams for the future, and so on, in their mother tongue and heritage language. Why don't you listen to the thoughts of high school students of the same generation? We will also be having an exchange meeting, so this will be an opportunity to get to know students from other schools and communicate your thoughts with each other. We are looking forward to the participation of many high school students!”³⁾

Based on the announcement, it is clear that the event is open to the general public. On the matter of audience, there is no mention of it targeting only students with multicultural roots as audience members. It is intended that “high school students of the same generation” will come to watch. At the time of writing this paper (2022), the speech contest is already on its 21st cycle. The event is held in various event halls or school auditoriums until the first half of 2020. When the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) spread in Japan, the speech contest continued asynchronously. In 2021, contestants submitted video recordings of them giving their speech. Face-to-face competition resumed in June 2022, however with limited audience that only comprised of the student-contestants, members of the Board, contest judges, teachers who guided the presentations and other people related to the event.

The Shogakukan Unabridged Dictionary of the Japanese Language (日本国語大辞典) defines waiwai (わいわい) as a Japanese onomatopoeic word that describes a large number of people making lots of noise and/or an urging to make someone speak louder. The word is commonly used in activities that sees a gathering of many individuals⁴⁾.

3) Organizers encouraged high school students and other guests to attend the speech contest in 2018 and 2020. The event announcement in Japanese reads: “外国にルーツをもつ高校生が、体験したことや日ごろ思っていること・感じていること、将来の夢…などを母語・継承語で語ってくれます。同世代の高校生の思いを聞いてみませんか？また交流会もありますので、ほかの学校の生徒さんと知り合ったり、思いを伝え合ったりする機会にもなります。たくさんの高校生の参加を待っています！”

4) Three examples, among many, of places and activities in Osaka where the word waiwai (wai wai) is used are: a) Child and Mother Waiwai Retreat (子どもとママの隠れ家わいわい), a peaceful old private house in Osaka's Higashi-Sumiyoshi Ward is Japan which offers a space for parents and children and where childcare is possible (<http://waiwai-home.ys-brain.jp>), b) Kisen Waiwai Village (紀泉わいわい村), a facility found in an area between mountain foothills and arable flat land that offers environmental education (<https://osakaymca.or.jp/outdoor/kisenwaiwaimura/index.html>), and c) Waiwai Studio (わいわいスタジオ), a studio that is part of Kids Plaza Osaka, which allows visitors to experience the world of broadcasting and video (<https://www.kidsplaza.or.jp/floor/5f/studio/>).

To fulfill the objectives of this paper, I examined the speech scripts of contestants with "Filipino roots" from 2018 to 2020. There were a total number of 25 speech scripts, which also corresponds to the number of students with "Filipino roots" who joined the contest in 2018 to 2020. I coded the themes that emerged from the speech scripts and examined the writing style of the participants as well as the common errors that were made. I watched Wai Wai! Talk as a guest in 2018 and 2019. In 2021, I was appointed to be in-charge of a sophomore class in Mother Tongue and Heritage Language in one of the prefectural high schools. I sat on the preliminary auditions and my opinions were sought by other teachers on my choice of students to send to the contest and later, I conducted speech training to Filipinos with mixed roots who were chosen by the school committee to represent the high school.

With regards to the acquisition and usage of the speech scripts, I made known to the Wai Wai! Talk organizing staff who are composed of teachers from the participating schools about my intention to do research and to write about the speech contest and was permitted to have copies of the program that contains the speech scripts. Interviews with the students were held only after I obtained informed consent from them. This was in verbal form because the informants were not comfortable in signing documents. The students were informed about (a) the purpose of the research, expected duration, procedures and the implications of their involvement; (b) their right to decline to participate and to withdraw from the research once participation has begun; (b) the foreseeable consequences of declining or withdrawing; (d) reasonably foreseeable factors that may be expected to influence their willingness to participate such as potential risks, discomfort, or adverse effects; (e) any prospective research benefits; (f) limits of confidentiality; (g) incentives for participation; and (h) whom to contact for questions about the study. Hereon, the names of the high school and individuals related to the Wai Wai! Talk speech contest are assigned pseudonyms to protect their privacy.

The study has limitations because only the viewpoints of the contestants are presented. It was only in the later part of the interviews with them when a teacher was identified by a student to have participation in the choice of what language to use in the presentation. Due to time constraints and difficulties in setting schedules, the views of the teachers and members of decision-making board are not included as to why certain topics are chosen over others and why some languages are preferred and suggested over another. I can only give my personal impression as someone who sat down during the preliminary auditions, but even so this is limited because I am not a member of the committee that makes the final decision on who to send to

Wai Wai! Talk. I concur that the views and opinions of teachers and members of decision-making board are important, and these can be examined as a continuing study to this preliminary report.

2. The Wai Wai! Talk Speech Contest and Speech Scripts of Students with Filipino Background in 2018–2020

2.1. Event Information Dissemination

Information about the Wai Wai! Talk speech contest is announced online through a public post by the Osaka Prefecture Japanese Language Education Support Center. Additionally, those who know about Wai Wai! Talk can invite other people to attend. During the event day, the entrance of the event hall serves as a reception where attendees' names are counterchecked on a pre-printed information sheet. Those whose names are not on the list should handwrite their names and affiliation on a sheet provided in the reception area. After registering themselves in the reception, the audience is handed a program printed on B4 size paper which contains the activity's timeline and the speech scripts of the contestants. The scripts of the students are printed in both the language used in delivering the speech and in Japanese. The program should be returned to the event organizing staff at the end of the event. However, those who want a copy of the program can ask permission for it to be taken with them. As mentioned earlier, I was able to obtain copies of the program with speech scripts by requesting them from the Wai Wai! Talk organizing staff. I clearly stated the purpose of my request and was given permission to use these for research.

2.2. Wai Wai! Talk Contestants

In 2018 to 2020, the total number of contestants who joined the speech competition was 95. 25 of these are students of Filipino background. There were 15 female students and 10 male students who participated. All the 25 individuals have either lived in the Philippines and/or have at least one parent who is a Filipino national. Representatives with roots from the Philippines comprise of the second largest number of delegates in Wai Wai! Talk. The largest number of delegates are students with roots from China. The countries where the students proclaim they have roots from and the number of contestants per cycle is summarized in the table below:

Table 1. Countries that the Wai Wai! Talk 2018 to 2020 contestants have roots in.

Country	Cycle 17.1	Cycle 17.2	Cycle 18.1	Cycle 18.2	Total
China	14	10	8	8	40
Philippines	6	6	6	7	25
South Korea	1	3			4
Nepal	3			2	5
Thailand	1		1		2
Taiwan	1				1
Malaysia	1				1
Vietnam	1	4	1		6
Peru		2	1		3
Egypt		1			1
Cambodia			1		1
Indonesia			1		1
Pakistan			2		2
Brazil				1	1
Syria				2	2

The 25 participants share similarities with each other on having had either lived in the Philippines and/or having at least one parent who is a Filipino national. Of course, examination of their scripts reveals differences in the specifics of their experiences. Based on their disclosure of their age or grade/year level in school at the time of arrival in Japan during their presentation, it became known that the contestants arrived around the ages of 6 to 16 years old. Among them are children who have been born in Japan but who have moved to the Philippines when they were still toddlers and then returned to Japan. The length of stay in the Philippines among those who have been born in Japan varied according to person, but most of them returned to Japan when they were in junior high school level.

Many of contestant's mothers arrived in Japan for employment. During the period of their mother's absence, the children were raised by their relatives in the Philippines, particularly their grandparents or aunts. Only two participants were raised by their fathers before they moved to Japan to be with one's mother and her new family. Most of the children arrived in Japan after their mother fetched them in the Philippines. Some arrived with their siblings. One contestant was raised by both parents in the Philippines until the father moved to Japan to work. After a year, the said child and the mother were able to join the father in Japan.

As observed, most of the student representatives with Filipino roots were raised in the Philip-

pines during their formative years⁵⁾. Those who were born in Japan were brought to the Philippines when they were toddlers and then they returned to Japan in the later part of elementary until senior high school level. One Wai Wai! Talk contestant had the experience of moving back and forth from Japan and the Philippines. The initial move to Japan was during the first grade of elementary level, then the child returned to the Philippines after three years (during the fourth grade of elementary). This student moved to Japan once again during the third year of junior high school.

Most students revealed that the language that they are comfortable using is the language of the locality where they have stayed in the Philippines (ex. Tagalog or Binisaya). One contestant disclosed that the language in their household in central Philippines was English even if the languages commonly used in their locality was the local language, Binisaya and/or Filipino.

2.3. Languages Used in Wai Wai! Talk

The language that most of the students with Filipino background used in delivering the speech is Filipino. Specifically, Filipino was used by 21 out of 25 contestants. There were four contestants who gave their speech in Binisaya. In the previous section, I briefly mentioned a contestant who was born and raised in central Philippines but spoke English from the time of birth. This student presented in Binisaya for the Wai Wai! Talk speech contest.

Table 2. Languages that students with Filipino background used in delivering speech in Wai Wai! Talk 2018-2020

Language Used in the Competition	Total
Filipino	21
Binisaya	4

Filipino is the national language of the Philippines. Article XIV Section 6 of the 1987 Republic of the Philippines Constitution establishes Filipino as the national language of the country. The Filipino language is developed and enriched through existing Philippine and other languages. Filipino is based on Tagalog, the native language of Manila and its surrounding provinces (Reid 2005). On the other hand, Binisaya or Vinisaya is spoken in the Philippines' Visayas Region

5) In a brochure entitled "The formative years: UNICEF's work on measuring early childhood development" (2019) the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) states that, "Early childhood, which spans the period up to 8 years of age, is critical for cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. During these years, a child's newly developing brain is highly plastic and responsive to change as billions of integrated neural circuits are established through the interaction of genetics, environment, and experience."

(located in central Philippines) and northern Mindanao (located in southern Philippines). The Linguistic Data Consortium (2020) notes that “Cebuano Visayan” language is only referred to as such in the academe and among non-Cebuano speakers and that native speakers of the language prefer to use the term Binisaya or Vinisaya to refer to their language.

Most of the contestants used English words in their mostly Filipino speech and used English words in their mostly Binisaya speech. Japanese words were also borrowed. One representative alternated between Filipino and English sentences. This practice is called code-switching. Bautista (2004, 226) gives a description on the practice of using English words with Filipino. She states that Taglish (Tagalog-English) code switching or “Tagalog-English mix-mix,” is the alternation of Tagalog and English in the same discourse or conversation (Gumperz 1982). It is the use of Tagalog words, phrases, clauses, and sentences in English discourse, or vice-versa. Bautista adds that the term Taglish is also occasionally used generically for the switching that takes place between a Philippine language (not necessarily Tagalog) and English. Taglish is considered as the language of informality among middle-class, college-educated, urbanized Filipinos. Bautista adds that Taglish is now a lingua franca in Philippine cities but in the past, it was initially looked down upon and viewed as a corruption of Tagalog or English.

Most of the code-switching made in 25 of the speech scripts that were examined were in the use of content words and idioms. Content words are defined by Bautista (2004, 229) as local words for local realities such as food words, kinship terms, culture-specific lexical items. On the other hand, idioms are metaphorical expressions that are found in one language but may not be available in the other. Examples of content words that were used by the students in the speech scripts are *high school*, *teacher*, *exam*, *classmates*, among others. Aside from English, Japanese words were also used in the presentation when talking about school matters, such as *yasumi*, *bunkasai*, *taiikusai*, *ryuunen*, among others. For the complete list of the content words used in Wai Wai! Talk from 2018–2020, see Appendix A.

It is common among Filipinos to use Taglish in conversations and writing (Goutlet 1971, 83). My examination of Wai Wai! Talk speech scripts reveal that the scripts were written in colloquial and spoken Filipino style. Errors in writing and habitual grammatical mistakes in the scripts were also observed⁶⁾. English idioms and phrases were sprinkled in the presentations

6) The commonly made mistakes in many of the scripts were in the following: a) non-capitalization of proper nouns, b) incorrect usage or non-usage of punctuation marks, c) interchanging of the letters e and i, d) interchanging of the

uttered by few of the contestants. The use of English idioms and phrases seem to serve the function of putting emphasis to what the contestants are saying. Examples to these are:

"Prove them wrong."

"Technology is best when it brings people together."

"Never make the same mistake twice."

"No man is an island."

"It's hard to get along with other people, thinking you are still a visitor to their country."

Bautista (1999) explains that a specific switch happens to achieve "communicative efficiency." It is said that switching to the other code or language delivers the fastest, easiest, most convenient way of conveying something with the least waste of time, effort, and resources. Bautista (2004, 231) describes the uses of Taglish in Philippine society is important as a mode of discourse and a linguistic resource. Her paper describes how code switching can be viewed as a form of resistance to monolingualism and globalization. She advises that educators become aware of such analyses so that they do not easily dismiss Tagalog-English code switching as an instance of random, irregular mixing of languages that results from imperfect control of either language. For her, code switching is bilingual performance on display.

Like Filipino, English is also an official language in the Philippines⁷⁾. The Philippines is recognized globally as one of the largest English-speaking nations (British Council 2015, Malicsi 2007). Interestingly, during the period covered in this study, English was not used by any of the contestants with Filipino roots nor any of the other contestants. An interview I conducted with a previous Wai Wai! Talk contestant with Filipino background whose language since birth is

letters o and u, e) writing very long sentences and paragraphs, and f) spelling mistakes. It can be inferred that writing in Filipino is hardly practiced by the contestants and that there are lesser opportunities of doing so in the school in Japan.

Non-capitalization of Filipino proper nouns by the students may possibly be attributed to absence of capitalization when writing proper nouns in Japanese. Examples are writing "bansang hapon" instead of "bansang Hapon" and "amerika" instead of "Amerika." There were also instances where words become unnecessarily capitalized such as capitalization in the letters v and t in "Volunteers na Teacher" and capitalization of the letter k in "pumasok sa Kolehiyo." Punctuation marks, such as hyphens, commas and periods are also not correctly used. For example, hyphens were missing in "I take," and "mag Japanese." There are also instances where whole words are written as separate parts such as "mag karoon" and "nag babago." Interchanging of the letters e and i were observed such as in "eto," aken," and "den". These should respectively be "ito," akin," and "din," if written correctly. Interchanging of the letters o and u were also observed such as in "kompara," and "tomolong," which is correctly "kumpara" and "tumulong," respectively.

7) The 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines – Article XIV Section 7 states that "For purposes of communication and instruction, the official languages of the Philippines are Filipino and, until otherwise provided by law, English."

English revealed wanting to deliver the speech in English. The student was later urged by a Japanese teacher to present in a Philippine language instead, so the student delivered the speech in Filipino. While this personal account of presenting in a language that is not one's mother tongue came up only twice in this study, it is of interest to examine about the preparations and decision making made for the speech contest. The revelation of how a teacher convinced a student to use another language instead of what the student considers as one's thinking language tells us that there is a possibility that while the students and their narratives take center stage during presentation, there are also other individuals, like the teachers, that take part in the creation of speech scripts through advice given. For example, advice on what theme to emphasize during competition and as narrated, getting approval on what language to be used. Therefore, it can be assumed that the definition of "foreign roots" is a matter not solely in the hands of the students themselves. Aside from what has been pointed, it is also the choice of a school decision-making body who to send to the competition. To what extent do other people who are involved in the contest define who a person with multicultural background in Japan is?

2.4. Topics Presented in Wai Wai! Talk

The themes that the students tackled in the contest are categorized into two: personal experiences and presentation of information on a given topic. The topics are related to important life events of the participants. 21 participants talked about their personal experiences, while four students presented about a certain theme. The four contestants did not refer to themselves in their speech presentation, rather had the aim of providing information on the topic. Specifically, an event in Japan, depression, discrimination, and differences among people.

Those who narrated about their personal experiences in the speech competition talked about a) Moving to Japan, b) Entering High School, c) Life in the Philippines, d) Language Learning and Acquisition, e) About One's Parent, f) Life's Lessons, g) Dreams and Plans for the Future, and h) Identity and Mental Health Issues. I will describe these individually below.

- a) **Moving to Japan** – Most of the contestants talked about their experiences regarding their move to Japan. They did not talk about arrival as a one-time act, instead they related this instance to their daily life experiences. The students narrated the changes and challenges that they face and described their ways of coping with homesickness and other predicaments. Some narrated about being excited and happy during the first few months of their move and how their mothers took them around Japan for travelling before they had to

face the “reality” of living in the country. Many wished to “visit” or to “return” to the Philippines upon experiencing problems in Japan. They expressed nervousness about making new friends and initiating friendship. Some talked about their friendship with Japanese and fellow foreigners. Family issues were also discussed.

b) **Entering High School** – Similar and connected to their narration of being nervous about living in Japan, is entering high school. The students were told beforehand that high school life in Japan is different from that of the Philippines, however they still did not expect to what extent it was difficult until they experienced it. The problems that the Wai Wai! Talk contestants shared were of taking high school entrance exams, studying Japanese and other subjects taught in Japanese, and bullying. They expressed being confused and anxious because of the various advice they received. They revealed being aware about the importance of education, but some have thought of quitting school and finding work to help their family financially. Many of the contestants stated their desire of continuing to college. Despite of the hurdles that they faced in high school, they mentioned enjoying joining school clubs and festivals. However, some students voiced their wish to also be able to do Philippine festivals and celebrations in Japan.

c) **Life in the Philippines** – The Wai Wai! Talk contestants spoke about their being born, childhood experiences and growing up in the Philippines. Many of them talked about living in a broken family, pain of losing a loved one, and having financial problems. There were some among the presenters who were brought to the Philippines after being born in Japan. The children were left to their grandparents or relatives’ care, of which they narrated being well-loved. They made friends and had *barkada* or peer groups. The challenges that they faced in the Philippines are connected to the reason why they had to eventually go to Japan. For this, they had to quit school in the Philippines. One contestant was supposed to enroll in college in the Philippines but had to retake high school in Japan. Some shared that the issues made them feel not having choices.

d) **Language Acquisition and Challenges** – Learning Japanese language is a common challenge that Wai Wai! Talk contestants with Filipino roots face as a student and resident in Japan. For them, not being adept in Japanese is a barrier between them and their Japanese classmates because they are not able to express themselves and speak to them. A student revealed that the Philippine languages (Filipino and Binisaya) learned during

childhood began to be forgotten little by little while learning Japanese. For those who spoke English or Japanese as a mother tongue, difficulties in learning Filipino and Binisiya while they were brought to the Philippines have also been revealed.

e) **About One's Parent** – Among the personalities mentioned in the speech, what garnered the most mentions were the parents. The mother was the most talked about person followed by the father. Students whose mothers have remarried in Japan talked about having two fathers: the biological father and the Japanese father. Many of the speech contestants related their own experiences to that of their mother and/or parents.

f) **Life's Lessons** – Despite of their youth, most of them have already experienced a lot in life. The contestants with Filipino background have opened and revealed their personal stories and experiences to others through their speech presentation. Many of them look at their experiences as success stories that can serve as inspiration to others. They expect that challenges will continue, but they express positivity by keeping in mind the importance of not quitting, continuing to fight for themselves, and not holding grudges.

g) **Dreams and Plans for the Future** – The contestants have high hopes for themselves in the future. They revealed that their experiences have strengthened them, and they continue to reach their goals. After graduating in high school, many of them want to earn for their family (to help their mother), to become a teacher, and to go to college.

Among the themes mentioned above, Identity and Mental Health issues were also tackled and integrated in the scripts. Most of the contestants expressed their situation by referring to emotions and feelings, such as longing, sadness, nervousness, anxiety, and depression. "Home" is a topic that is usually brought up in relation to people with multicultural background. The Wai Wai! Talk contestants with Filipino roots, specifically those who were raised in the Philippines in their younger years, consider the Philippines to be their home. This became apparent when they voiced their wish to return to the Philippines after staying longer and experiencing life in Japan.

Basing on the scripts, individuals with Filipino roots in Japan weave their own experiences with people around them and these individuals' experiences. This was especially evident when students mentioned other personalities and happenings in their speech. Most of them referred to

their parents, specifically the mother in their speech. The Filipino mother is described as a hard-working person who endures living separately from her child to make ends meet. Additionally, a mother's goal is for her and her child to reunite in Japan. Other individuals mentioned were guardians and other adults, such as fathers, grandparents, aunts, and teachers. The contestants cited the importance of having friends in high school and related this to the importance of learning the Japanese language. Those who were able to make Japanese friends shared their happiness of doing so in their presentation.

The speech contest scripts can be viewed as a dialogic exchange, therefore it is "multi-voiced." While each Wai Wai! Talk contestant has their own framing about being an individual with "roots from outside of Japan," their speech scripts are also produced in relation to other individuals. We find similarities and patterns in the stories shared and these tell us what the students collectively understand as significant life experiences. In my Mother Tongue and Heritage class, students have many opportunities to discuss about their migration experience among themselves. Childhood nostalgia resonates strongly among them, and this becomes more pronounced as they are confronted with the reality of being away from the Philippines and what is absent. Also, prior to joining Wai Wai! Talk, the students are already aware of the contest and the themes that are commonly presented. In one interview, one student commented that the personal experience can be presented in Wai Wai! Talk and win because the story of managing migrant life amidst challenges and difficulties is more likely to win awards compared to other topics.

The students with Filipino roots are aware that the narratives and stories that they shared is for an audience that is watching and listening. The contestants were open and honest about their feelings, particularly in divulging about personal details about their lives. In a discussion that I had with students who are eligible to join and who have joined Wai Wai! Talk, they revealed that they want to say something about themselves and are eager to share their experiences in the contest. The students said that their participation is for people like them who are of multicultural background to be understood better by others. These findings are similar to the other reports on the active participation in events by Filipinos in Japan.

However, that of Wai Wai! Talk being a competition may also influence what topic is talked about and in what language it is presented, and this may not be what a student with Filipino roots has in mind. Earlier in the paper, I narrated a story of a Japanese teacher instructing a student to give the speech in Filipino rather than in English, the mother tongue and preferred

language of the student. The response of the teacher can be construed as linguistic essentialism, which according to Tupas (2016, 68) is "the attribution of particular values and meanings to a particular language such that this language alone (and not other available languages) can or should carry these attributes." In the above given case, it supposes that giving the speech in English is contrary to being Filipino because English is a colonial language. On matter of the student contestant's agency, this can be seen as silencing the very voice that the Wai Wai! Talk wants to propagate. On a wider view, it fails to recognize the changing dynamics of language use in the Philippines such as what has been discussed earlier about the prevalence of Taglish among Filipinos.

3. Conclusion

Learning more about other groups of people is said to be an effective way to improve cohesion and inclusion among groups coming from various background. Previous studies about public performances of Filipinos in Japan report that Filipinos in Japan use singing competitions, musical plays, and dancing in Japanese local festivals to convey about themselves to others. Furthermore, divulging about personal details about their lives may be a way of opening oneself and could be an invitation into one's personal life.

This study on Wai Wai! Talk speech scripts of high school students with Filipino background shows that most of the contestants shared and talked about their personal experiences. 21 out of 25 individuals presented about their experiences. These contestants showed similarities of feeling nervous about living in Japan, particularly of going to school, making new friends, taking entrance exams, and learning Japanese. Naturally, they have differences in the specifics of living in the individual level, such as in how one lived in Philippines and the relationships within their family. The contestants' personal experiences intertwine with other people and their experiences. The students talked about the challenges that they faced in their young lives, and they presented them as success stories that can serve as inspiration to people who are going through the same.

It is unfortunate that even if Wai Wai! Talk is already in its 21st year, no research has been made about this event. I understand the importance of protecting the identities of minors and reiterate that we as researchers should uphold these ethical considerations, however there are also ways to protect the informants' identity and privacy and at the same be able to help them disseminate

about their situation so that their group can be more understood by a wider audience. After all, the students joined the speech contest knowing that the event will be viewed by an audience. The contestants and eligible students themselves want to make their stories and experiences as individuals with Filipino roots be more known and not just be kept within a small group. A deeper examination of the topic such conducting in-depth interviews with teachers and the decision-making body can be undertaken and different views are welcome to make the discourse more vibrant. As the state of COVID-19 eases, it is an aspiration that Wai Wai! Talk resumes being open to more attendees. This means not just reverting to how it was conducted during pre-pandemic times but to reach to farther and beyond the usual audience. Doing so will initiate dynamic cultural exchanges among people with multicultural roots, various groups in Japan and the Japanese people.

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Appendix A. Content Words used in Wai Wai! Talk from 2018–2020. The words listed below are as the students wrote them in their scripts.

English

accent	expect	recent events
adviser teacher	feelings	regular
air pollution	field trip	section
alien card	first time	semester
answer sheet	focus	Senior high
anxiety	foreigners	seniors
assignments	grade six elementary	shock
basketball club	homeroom	smartphone
caregiver	homework	solar system
challenge	human washing machine	speech
classmates	I decided	spring break
coach	identity	start
computer	Japanese class	stop
concept model	Junior high school	summer break
dance club	last school year	summer vacation
depression	machine	text paper
drawing	meeting	thousand
dryer	memorable	time machine
economic depression	mental health	traditional dress
electric cars	mental health illness	TV
entrance exam	parts	volunteers
event	pieces	web developer
exam	play style	winter
examiners	point	wireless cellphone
exciting	puzzle	words

日本語

AIUEO	ryuunen
aki	senpai
anime	sports fes
baito	taikusai
bunkasai	yasumi
double	
kodomo no hiroba	ダンススタジアム新人戦西日本大会
nyugakushiki	優秀賞

Appendix B. Sample of Speech Contest Scripts from Wai Wai! Talk 2018–2020. The speech contest scripts below are as the students wrote them. The names of the student and school are omitted for anonymity. The author would like to thank one of this paper’s reviewer for the suggestion of adding sample speech scripts in the appendix.

Appendix B. 1. Student A

Filipino

Homesickness ～一人じゃない～

Nang binigyan ako ng pagkakataong sumali sa talampatihan ito, ang unang pumasok sa isip ko ay gusto kong ibahagi ang aking mga karanasan simula ng nanirahan ako dito sa Japan. Pero dahil sa mga recent events, I decided na baguhin ito ng konti. Kahit saan, may mahahanap at mahahanap tayong dayuhan. Lahat ng mga dayuhang makikita at makikilala natin ay may sari-sariling dahilan kung bakit nila nilisan ang kanilang bansa upang pumunta sa iba. Merong mga dayuhang bumibisita lamang, turista. Mga dayuhang gusting makita lahat ng kayang ialok ng mundo. Meron ding gusto mag bagong buhay at magpaka-layo-layo. Pero ang karamihan, ay nilisan ang kanilang kinasanayang buhay, at pamilya upang masustensyahan lamang sila.

Sanggol pa lamang ako ay nagtrabaho na dito sa Japan ang aking ina. Ang nagpalaki sa akin ay ang aking ate at ang kanyang asawa. Trinato nila ako katulad ng pagtrato nila sa kanilang 3 anak. Kaya naman sa aking mata, sila ang aking pamilya. No words can describe

how much I love them and how grateful I am to them.

Bago akong mag-desisyon na dito na ako mag-aaral, I had never even thought about how my mom is doing, I always felt satisfied with the life I had. Kasi kahit na hindi ko kasama ang aking ina, I never felt na may kulang sa buhay ko. Kasi meron akong pamilyang palaging nandyan para sakin. Looking back, I realized how much of an ignorant I was. Bata pa lamang ako ay pabalikbalik na ako sa Japan para makasama ang aking ina. Hindi ko sinasabi na it was always a pleasure being here. Dahil kahit na kasama ko ang aking ina, ang nahanap ko pa rin ay ang aking pamilya sa Pinas. Hanggang nasanay na ako na, sadyang may mga panahon na mahihirap walay ako sa kanila. Pero okay na, kasi habang nandito ako nakakapag-bonding kaming mag-ina. Don't get me wrong though, I am grateful for having many opportunities na mag travel abroad from a very young age.

I didn't really think much of it until I decided to go to Japan. Isa sa mga madalas naming pag-usapan ng aking ate ay kung ano ang gusto kong marating sa buhay ko. We talked about my studying here dahil kompara sa aking bansa, mas marami at mas malaking oportunidad ang meron dito sa Japan. Madalas namin itong pinagusapan hanggang sa mabuo ang desisyon kong mag aral rito. Nung una, wala lang. Kasi malaki ang tiwala ko na kaya kong malagpasan lahat ng aking pagdadaanan. I was naïve, ignorant and too confident about myself.

Leaving and saying goodbye was the hardest. Naalala ko pa nung ihatid nila ako sa airport. Mataas ang pride ko especially when I'm around my sisters dahil they look up to me. I did my very best not to cry in front of them, but the sorrow I felt was absolutely horrible. Parang sinampal ako ng realidad na, hindi ko na sila makakasama, at kung makakasama ko nga sila, limitado naman ang oras namin.

Yun yung panahon na naisip ko, ano kaya ang naramdaman ng aking ina nung kinaylangan niyang iwanan ang pamilya niya para lang masustensyahan kami. Hindi katulad nasyon, nung siya'y umalis, hindi pa gaanong ka-advance ang teknolohiya at social media. habang kaya kong makausap ang aking pamilya kahit kelan ko gusto, nung nagpunta siya dito para magtrabaho, madalang niya makausap ang kanyang pamilya.

Mga unang lumipas na buwan, It was sorrow at it's best. Wala yung pamilya ko, wala akong kaibigan, madalas mag-isa lamang ako sa bahay dahil lahat ng kasama ko ay may trabaho. Walang araw na lumagpas na hindi ako tumatawag sa Pinas. Kahit na minsan, hindi kami nagkakausap. Grabeng pangungulila ang aking naramdaman. It didn't matter na may kasama ako. Pakiramdam ko, mag-isa lang ako.

With time it got better. Nag simula na kaming maghanap ng mapapasukan kong iskwelahan. Pero bago lahat, kinaylangan ko munang magaral ng hapon. Doon ako unang nakagawa ng

kaibigan, malaki ang pasasalamat sa kanila, dahil sa kanila hindi ko maiisip na mapupunta ako dito dahil sa kanila. They taught me to be confident in myself, sa mga panahon na sa tingin ko, na masasayang lang ang efforts ko. At na wala akong kailangan katakutan. I will always be grateful for that.

Nang makapasa ako sa ○ ○ ○ isang taon na ang nakaraan. I felt really insecure about my age and I was anxious if makakagawa ako ng kaibigan dito. Salamat sa Diyos at nakagawa nga ako. School wasn't easy. Things are much more fast paced than what I was used to. May mga oras na naiisip ko na sana di nalang ako nag punta dito. But then I remember the people who love and support me, just by remembering that I remember why I went here for in the first place. Kahit na hanggang ngayon medyo nahihirapan pa rin akong kumausap sa iba, I know I'll be fine. Sa paglipas ng oras, I am able to cope and adjust better. Pero yung kalungkutan at sabik naramdaman, although minsan nakakalimutan, hindi nababawasan.

Kaya naman gusto kong ilaan ang aking talumpati para sa mga dayuhang iniwan ang kanilang buhay at handang tiisin ang sakit ng mahiwalay sa kanilang pamilya, para lamang sa ikabubuti ng kanilang pamilya.

Ako na hindi pa gaanong katagal nandito kompra sa inyo pero nangungulila na kompra sa inyo pero nangungulila na. Habang ikaw naman, na napaka tagal nang nahiwalay sa iyong pamilya pero patuloy parin sa pagtiis para lamang sa ikabubuhay nila, isa kang tunay na bayani.

At saludo ako sayo, kapamilya.

日本語

「ホームシック ～一人じゃない～」

このスピーチ大会に参加する機会を与えられた時、最初に頭に浮かんだのは、日本で暮らしはじめてからの経験を皆さんに伝えることでした。しかし、最近の出来事から、内容を少し変更することに決めました。現在は、外国人をどこでも探すことができます。私たちが出会い、知り合う外国人達には、それぞれ自分の国を離れ、日本に来る理由があります。観光のように一時的な訪問の人、世界の様々なものに出会うために来た人、新しい生活を始めるために来た人など。しかし、多くは、家族を支えるため、よりよい生活をするために慣れ親しんできた生活と家族を残してきた外国人です。

私がまだ赤ん坊の頃、母は日本で働いていました。フィリピンで私を育ててくれたのは姉夫婦でした。姉夫婦は自分たちの3人の子供と同じように、私にも接してくれました。だから私にとっては、姉家族は私の家族なのです。私がどれほど彼らのことを愛し、感謝しているか、どんな言葉でも言い表せません。

私は、日本で勉強すると心が決まるまで、ママが日本でどうしているかなど、考えたことすらありませんでした。自分の過ごしていた生活にいつも満足を感じていました。母と一緒にいなくても、私の人生に足りないものがあると感じたことがなかったからです。私のためにいつもそこにいてくれる家族が、私にはあったからです。この原稿を書きながら、そのころを振り返ってみると、私はどれほど多くのことについて無知だったかに気づきました。私は子どもの頃、母と一緒に過ごすため、何度か日本を行ったり来たりしていました。私は母と一緒にいるから嬉しいといつも思っていたわけではなく、フィリピンの家族を探し求めてばかりいました。やっと色々なことに慣れたところに、突然姉達と引き離されたからだと思います。もちろん誤解しないでほしいのですが、日本にいる間、母と一緒に時間を過ごせたことや、幼い時に外国へ旅行するチャンスを与えてもらったことには、とても感謝しています。

私はそのことについて、本当にあまり考えたことがなかったのです。私が日本へ行くと決心するまでは。姉との相談の中で頻繁に話したことは、私が人生で到達したいことは何か、ということです。日本で勉強することは、私の国に比べてより多くの、そしてより大きなチャンスがあるのです。私の決心が固まるまで、何度も話し合いました。決めたときも、私は別に大したことだとは思いませんでした。なぜなら、私は、これから経験する全てのことを乗り越えていくことができる、と自分に自信があったのです。なんと世間知らずで、無知で、自信過剰だったのでしょう。

去ることと、さよならを言うことは最もつらいことでした。空港で見送ってもらった時のことを今でも覚えています。姉の子供達は私のことを尊敬してくれているので、彼らと一緒にいる時は特にプライドを保つ必要がありました。彼らの前で泣かないように、なんとか努力しました。しかし、私を感じた悲しみはとてつもないものでした。もう一緒に暮らせない、もし一緒にいられるとしても、限られた時間の中だけなんだという現実に関わり合えなかったように感じました。その時、私は「母が私たちを支えるためだけに、家族をおいていかなければならなかった時の気持ちはどんなだっただろう」と考えました。

母が行った時には、現在のようにSNSも技術も今ほど発達していません。今なら私は望む時、いつでも家族に話しかけることができますが、働きに日本へ来た母はめったに家族と話せなかったのです。

来日してから1ヶ月、悲しみは最高潮でした。家族もいない、友達もいない、家で一緒に暮らしているみんなには仕事があり、私は家でしょっちゅうひとりぼっちでした。私がフィリピンへ連絡を取らない日はありませんでした。私はひどい孤独を感じていました。家族がそばにいない、そして家族がない。一緒に暮らしている人がいるということは関係ありませんでした。私の心の中は、ひとりぼっちだったのです。

時間とともに状況は上向きました。私は通える学校を探し始めたのです。でも、何よりもまず、日本語を勉強しなければなりません。〇〇〇で私は初めて友達を作ることができ、

〇〇〇の先生達にすごく感謝しています。なぜなら、私がそこへ通わなければ、今私はここにいないとは思えないからです。私は努力が無駄になるんじゃないか、と不安に感じた時もありましたが、先生たちに自分に自信をもつことを教えてもらいました。こわがることはありませんでした。いつもそのことに感謝しています。

私が〇〇〇に合格してから1年が経ちました。自分の年齢のことですごく不安に感じ、友達を作れるだろうかと心配もしていました。神様に感謝しなくてはなりませんが、友達を作ることができました。学校は易しくないです。私がこれまで経験していたペースよりもずっと速く物事が進んでいきます。日本に来なければよかったのに、と考える時もあります。しかし、その時、そもそもなぜ日本へ来たのかを思い返すことで、私を愛し、支えてくれる人達のことを思います。今でも、他の人に話しかけることに少し苦勞していますが、いずれうまくできるようになるだろうと思います。時間が経てば、もっと上手に対応できるようになるだろうと思います。フィリピンの家族に会えない寂しさと悲しみは、時々忘れることもありますが、軽減されることはやはりありません。

私はこのスピーチを、家族を支えるために家族との生活において、家族と離ればなれになる痛みを耐える外国人の人達に捧げます。

私はまだそれほど長く日本にいるわけではありませんが、ホームシックになりました。

あなたが、とても長い間家族と離ればなれになっても、それでも生活のために、そうする強さを持つあなたこそ、真の英雄です。

家族のみなさん、あなたに敬意を表します。

Appendix B. 2. Student B

Filipino

Aking Sinta

Magandang hapon sa inyong lahat. Ako si 〇 〇 〇 mula sa bansang Pilipinas. Ako'y nag-aaral sa sekondaryang paaralan ng 〇 〇 〇 ngayon nasa inyong harapan at magtatalumpati. Hindi ko alam kung saan ako magsisimula dahil ang isip ko ay puno ng mga salita na para bang gagawa ng isang tula. Maaaring nakamamangha pero para sa inyong lahat lalabanan ko ang aking kaba.

Para sa taong kasama ko ngayon sa hirap at ginhawa na kahit siya'y pagod na, ngingiti at magpapatawa pa rin para lang masabi "ayos lang" siya. Sa aking mga mata siya'y ubod ng ganda, tanawing kakaiba at napakapayapa. Masarap pagmasdan kaya para sa akin mula siya sa kalangitan. Sa pag-ibig niyang walang kapantay, ako ay nabuhay at nagkaroon ng saysay ang dating

mundong walang kulay. Ang aking sinta ay hindi din perpektong tao pero siya ang bumubuo ng aking pagkatao. Sa lahat ng kaniyang binibitiwang pangako, lahat ng iyon ay hindi napako kaya pakiramdam ko na ang swerte ko. Sa dinami daming unos na kaniyang nagpagdaanan dito sa mundong ibabaw, masasabi ko mas malakas pa siya sa kalabaw. Sa talumpati kong ito, gusto ko sabihin ang tumatakbo sa isipan ko. Kung paano nagkaroon ng kabuluhan ang lahat ng ito ng dahil sa inspirasyon ko.

Siya ang tumayo bilang aking haligi ng tahanan at ilaw, isa sa mga taong pumukaw ng aking damdamin. Noong wala siya sa aking tabi, ngalan niya ang lagi kong sinasabi. Noong kami'y masayang magkasama, para sa akin kailangan niya muling lumisan. Wala akong nagawa, umuwi lamang akong luhaan. Nang wala ang aking sinta hindi ako sanay ng wala siya, pero sa kabila nito nagpursigi ako para makamit lahat ang gusto kong makuha. Para sa akin hindi naging madali ang lahat pero ako ay puno ng kagalakan sa tuwing makita ko sa kanyang mukha ang ngiti at galak lalo na kapag may natatanggap akong medalya o sumasayaw habang ako ay nakatungtong sa entablado.

Dumating ang panahon na nabuksan ang aking isipan sa reyalidad na kung saan malayo sa aking inaasahan. Nawala ako sa aking landas, patungo sa aking tagumpay. Ang aking paghihirap sa lahat ng mga hindi magagandang nangyari sa akin nang ako pa ay nasa Pilipinas ay gusto kong magkaroon ng wakas, gusto ng lumisan kahit wala pang napapatunayan subalit para sa aking mahal pinilit kong magsumikap hanggang sa narating ko ang rurok. Pagkatapos nito, dahil sa kagustuhan kong makasama ang aking irog, napagdesisyunan kong umalis kahit labis akong nagdadalawang-isip dahil ayaw ko din iwan ang taong nagpalaki sa akin at minahal ko ng sobra. Ang aking iniibig ay ubod ng tuwa ng marinig niya ang aking nagawang desisyon. Ginawa niya ang lahat para muli kaming magkita at sa awa ni Bathala kami ay nagkasamang muli.

Sa unang beses ng aming pagkikita ulit ay hindi maipinta ang saya na nakikita ko sa kaniya. Hindi ko din maipahayag ang bumabagabag sa aking isipan matapos ang matagal na panahon nang hintayan. Sa bawat araw na siya'y aking kasama, hindi ako makapaniwala na kasama ko na talaga siya. Ang dahilan kung bakit ako nasa bansang Hapon ay para sa kaniya at ang pangunahing layunin ko ay tungkulin kong mag sumikap para muli akong magwagi sa mga bagay na gusto kong abutin at makita kong muli ang kaniyang ngiti sa kaniyang labi.

Hindi naging madali ang lahat ng inumpisahan kong mag-aral dito sa bansang banyaga wala akong kaibigan na kasama kong papasok ng paaralan o pauwi sa aming tahanan. Wala din akong ideya kung anong paksa ang mga sinasabi ng mga taong nasa aking paligid. Masyado akong nabingi sa katahimikang lumalamon sa aking tinatahak na daan. Pinili kong sabihin ang

aking mga hinain sa aking sinta kahit parang namimilipit ang aking dila. Masyado akong mapalad dahil naiintindihan niya ang aking salitaan.

“Kahit anong mangyari laban lang”

Iyon ang sabi niya sa tuwing nawawalan ako ng pag-asa. Hindi dito natatapos ang lahat, nagkaroon ulit ng suliranin na tuluyang nagpabago sa gusto kong mangyaring masayang talambuhay. Gumawa ako ng desisyon na alam kong kapag iyon ay mangyari, para ito sa ikabubuti ng lahat at darating ang araw na ako rin ay papalarin. Pinili kong tumigil sa pag-aaral, pagkatapos kung saan saan kami namalagi at ang mas masahol pa ay naghahanap kami ng salapi para makaligtas. Puno ng kirot ang bumabalot, hindi namin alam kung saang lakas huhugot. Maraming luha na ang nasayang dahil sa hindi pagkakaunawaan at sobrang paghinatay at oras na ginugol para lang malutas ang aming problema.

Noong Disyembre umuwi ako ng Pilipinas, iniwan ko ang aking iniibig dito sa bansang Hapon. Makalipas ang dalawang buwan ng aking pamamalagi ay ngakaron ako ng pagkakataon na bumalik dito upang mag-aral at makapiling muli ang sinta ko. Para sa aking sinta, mahal kita. Marami man kaming hindi pagkakaunawaan, hindi kami nag iiwanan. Oo nga pala, sa bawat salita na aking inilahad, ipinagmamalaki ko na ang lahat na ito ay para sa aking sinta, ang aking ina.

Salamat po sa inyong pakikinig.

日本語

「愛しい人へ」

皆さんこんにちは。私はフィリピン出身の〇〇〇です。私は〇〇〇で勉強をしています。どこから始めたらいいいのか分かりませんが、今、皆さんの前に立ち、発表します。私の心が物語を書くかのように言葉でいっぱいです。それは素晴らしいことかもしれませんが、皆さんの前で緊張と闘いながら頑張ります。

良かれ悪しかれ、または疲れていても笑顔で私に「大丈夫だよ」と言ってくれる人、私の目では彼女はとても美しいです。素敵で平和な風景のような見映えがとてもよく、天国からきたかのような人です。彼女の測りしれない愛のおかげで私はこの世に生まれました。そして、無色な世界が彩りになり、生きる意味ができました。私が愛する人は完璧な人ではありませんが、私の人生を完璧にさせてくれる人です。彼女は約束を何一つも破らず、全てかなえてくれます。だから私はとてもラッキーだと思っています。彼女は様々な試練を乗り越えてきたため、水牛より遥かに強いと思います。彼女のおかげで今の私がいるので、この発表を通して今の思いを彼女に伝えたいです。

彼女は私たちの家の柱と光で、私の心を動かした人です。だから、彼女が離れないといけな
ないときが来て、私は何もできず、泣きながら家にいました。彼女がいない生活はとて
もなれませんでした。彼女が私のそばにいないとき、彼女の名前を呼んでいました。そ
れでもあきらめずに自分の目標に向かいましたが、私に何かが欠けているような感じが
しました。私にとっては簡単ではありませんでした。それでも、学校やダンスでメダル
などをステージで受賞するときに彼女の喜んでる顔を思い浮かぶだけで私も喜びに満
ちていました。

そして自分の想像していたことと違う現実には目が覚めました。私は目指していた自
分の成功への道から外れました。フィリピンにいた時の全ての苦労や困難を終わらせ
たかったです。まだ何も達成できていないが消えたいと思いました。しかし、再び私
の愛する人のことを思い出すと私の力の源となり、またも頂上を目指し努力しよう
と思いました。その後、私の愛する人と一緒にいたいと思い、迷いながらもフィリ
ピンを離れることにしました。私を育て、私を愛した人^{ママ}立ちをフィリピンに残したく
ないので、あまりにも悩んだけど、私は残すことを決断しました。

私たちが最初に会ったとき、彼女は絵に描けないくらい喜んでる顔をしました。私
たちは長い間離れ離れでしたが、彼女と私が再び一緒にいることが今でもまだ信じ
られません。私が日本に来た理由は彼女のためです。それだけでなく、彼女は私の目
標を達成するための動力の源です。そして、その目標を達成し、再び彼女の笑顔
を目にしたいです。

他国で勉強することは決して簡単なことではありません。学校の行き帰りに友達一
人もいません。周りで話されていることも全く理解できません。そのため孤独感を
感じました。それで、彼女に言おうと思ったが、心配しそうなので迷いました。け
ど考えた結果、彼女に言いました。彼女は私の言ったことを理解してくれました。

“何が起ころうと戦え”と私に元気づけてくれました。

そのため、希望を失いそうな時、その言葉を思い出しています。そして私は元気
になります。しかし、苦難はそこで終わっていませんでした。自分勝手な決断をして
しまいました。それは学校をやめることでした。そして仕事を探し、お金を稼ごう
としました。しかし、その判断で私の周りまで傷つけてしまいました。あまりにも
周りに影響があったため、また、彼女を傷つけてしまいました。

そのことで、私はその年の12月に愛する彼女を置いて、フィリピンに帰るこ
とにしました。しかし、自分の行動に後悔をし、2か月後再び日本に来ました。そ
して、運がよく、再び学校に行ける機会がありました。そして、再び愛する彼女
と一緒にいることができました。彼女は何も言わず私を受け入れました。だから、
彼女に、「愛している」と心から伝えたいです。分かり合えないことが山ほどあり
ますが、彼女は私を置いていたりしませんでした。ちなみに今この発表に出ていた
私の「愛する人」は、私が誇りに思っている最愛の母です。

ご清聴ありがとうございます。

